

We claim:

1. A process for cleaning tray columns which have been used for  
5 rectificatively treating liquids comprising (meth)acrylic  
acid and/or esters thereof by conveying a basic liquid  
downward through the tray column, which comprises passing a  
gas through the tray column in countercurrent to the basic  
10 liquid in such a manner that, during the cleaning, the  
difference between the pressure in the gas phase immediately  
below the lowermost tray of the tray column and the pressure  
in the gas phase immediately above the uppermost tray of the  
tray column divided by the number of trays in the column is  
at least 0.5 mbar per tray.  
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2. A process as claimed in claim 1, wherein, during the  
cleaning, the difference between the pressure in the gas  
phase immediately above the uppermost tray of the tray column  
and the pressure in the gas phase immediately below the  
20 lowermost tray of the tray column divided by the number of  
trays in the column is from 1 to 5 mbar.
3. A process as claimed in claim 1, wherein, during the  
cleaning, the difference between the pressure in the gas  
25 phase immediately above the uppermost tray of the tray column  
and the pressure in the gas phase immediately below the  
lowermost tray of the tray column divided by the number of  
trays in the column is from 2 to 4 mbar.
- 30 4. A process as claimed in any of claims 1 to 3, wherein the  
basic liquid used is an aqueous solution of sodium hydroxide.
5. A process as claimed in any of claims 1 to 4, wherein the gas  
35 passed through the tray column in countercurrent to the basic  
liquid is air.

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